

Exhibit C

Transcript of Public Comment Meeting
(Aug. 21, 2023, 6:00 p.m. meeting held at JSU E-Center)

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Transcript of Audio File:

PUBLIC COMMENTS

STIPULATED ORDER FOR THE CITY OF

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

SEWER SYSTEM

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 2023

Audio Runtime: 52 minutes 21 seconds

1
2 SPEAKERS
3 Ronnie Crudup
4 Jeff Good
5 Monica Butler
6 Andy Hilton
7 Dorsey Carson
8 Alfrenett Johnson
9 John Wade
10 Sandy Carter
11 Jimmie Sandifer
12 Scott Crawford
13 J.C. Johnson, Jr.
14 Jennifer West
15 Brent Bailey
16 Scott Crawford - 2nd Comment
17 Ernest McBride
18 Deborah Perkins
19 Monica Butler - 2nd Comment
20 Shirley Richardson
21 Jeff Good - 2nd Comment
22
23
24
25

1 (Beginning of Audio Recording.)

2 MR. CRUDUP: Good afternoon. I'm Ronnie
3 Crudup Jr., State Representative for District 71, but
4 I'm also a South Jackson resident, and I work for New
5 Horizon Ministries, Inc., which is a nonprofit where we
6 serve the community. We've been dealing with the
7 issues of water and sewage for a long time.

8 And so I come today to -- really in support
9 of, you know, turning this over to Mr. Henifin. One of
10 the things as a public official, I've seen for a number
11 of years, trying to be able to serve my community,
12 serve my constituents. It's been difficult sometimes
13 to get somebody on the phone with the City of Jackson,
14 whether there are sewer issues, whether it's water
15 issues, and I can say since the water part has been
16 taken over, it's been a lot easier to get that process
17 done.

18 In my neighborhood right now, I live in [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED], I have a number of neighbors. Anytime it rains,
20 they're having sewage that overflows in their house.
21 We've dealt with this; they've dealt with this for over
22 a year. We've made calls to the city, we've made calls
23 to other people, but a lot of times there's no relief.
24 And so they are not here today, but I'm here to speak
25 on their behalf of trying to be able to serve them in

1 any way possible.

2 It's been so bad that they have tried to
3 sell their properties, their homes, for a little of
4 nothing. And they can't even get investment to buy the
5 house because they say it's -- we can't buy it in the
6 condition it's in because there's -- anytime it does
7 rain, they are getting sewage backed up in the house.

8 And so like I said, I'm here just to say,
9 I'm in favor of trying, you know, to turn this over to
10 Mr. Henifin to try to get some relief as -- as fast as
11 possible, not only for my constituents, but also a lot
12 of residents in Jackson.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

14 Next?

15 MR. GOOD: Good evening, I -- I'm honored to
16 go after Representative Crudup, a fantastic state
17 representative, a representative for our city. Mitzi
18 knows me well, anyone in here that knows me knows I
19 talk too much so I'm going to read straight from some
20 notes I made. I moved to Jackson [REDACTED]
21 [REDACTED].

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Tell us your name.

23 MR. GOOD: Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm Jeff Good.
24 I moved to Jackson in [REDACTED],
25 was a senior at that year at [REDACTED] and then went

1 to [REDACTED]. At that point in time, Jackson was
2 202,000 citizens, and our enrollment at [REDACTED] was 33,000
3 students. I went to -- to [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED]
5 [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED]

7 After eight years of selling computers, I
8 decided I wanted to go into business for myself. And
9 calling my best friend from high school that I met at
10 [REDACTED] that one year who was living in [REDACTED],
11 who was a chef, I convinced him to come home, we opened
12 restaurants, B [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED]

14 [REDACTED]. All three restaurants here in Jackson,
15 and most importantly, I am here in Jackson, and have
16 been since moving here as a teenager [REDACTED]

17 Since opening [REDACTED], I have been a
18 businessperson in Jackson through nine mayors, nine
19 different administrations. We had two deaths in
20 office, which meant that we had temporary mayors for
21 three months during the election process. Elections do
22 have consequences, during that second three-month
23 period, that's when the Siemens deal was signed. So
24 just -- I'm not trying to be silly, I'm being serious
25 about the -- about the number of administrations and

1 decisions that were made here.

2 I was keenly aware in 2013 when Mayor
3 Johnson negotiated for the City of Jackson a masterful
4 plan to have the stipulated order in place, because we
5 had no money in 2013, and he got us out of a crack to
6 be able to move forward and try to start fixing things.
7 Ten years later, we're here and nothing has been fixed.
8 Ten years later things are far worse. And 10 years
9 later, we now have 145,000 citizens and 18,000 students
10 at [REDACTED].

11 Our city does not have a lot of oomph, it
12 does not have a lot of manpower within the city
13 administration, and we saw that all happen as the water
14 system melted down. The sewer system has been the
15 thing that is much larger than the water system in
16 terms of threats to public safety and health. It is
17 also an economic driver that must be addressed if we're
18 ever going to get any economic activity again.

19 I will say that last week was budget
20 hearings with the City Council and the current
21 administration. And during that time, it was uncovered
22 that the City of Jackson has had their property and
23 casualty insurance canceled by their long-term carrier
24 for our failure to be able to answer the risk
25 assessments that have been put in place for our

1 property, so they will not underwrite us again. A
2 higher risk company has offered up a plan and it was
3 announced that it's going to be another \$2 million
4 additional premium. The city does not have those
5 funds, and so now we've gone into an ask by the
6 administration for another tax increase.

7 The bottom line is our city does not have
8 any resources. I would think that turning this over to
9 the third-party administrator who has proven to be
10 incredibly competent, as the representative just said,
11 would alleviate one more stressor to the city so we can
12 focus on the things that we need to focus on and
13 finally start to grow Jackson again.

14 Thank you.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Good.

16 MS. BUTLER: Hi, my name is Monica Butler
17 and, you know, I, like the two people before me, can't
18 speak about one issue without talking about the other.
19 In the [REDACTED] community in Jackson, we have seen the
20 positives with the third-party management of the water
21 system, particularly with our senior citizens. Prior
22 to the transition, we were constantly going out
23 purchasing cases of water just so they could take
24 medication, and we were doing this as a nonprofit on
25 our own. In addition to that, we saw multiple

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1 childcare centers in our community budgets get almost
2 alleviated (sic), just -- just diminished from having
3 to purchase Kentwood five-gallon jugs just to stay in
4 business so people could continue to work and have
5 somewhere for their children to come.

6 And since the transition -- and I must say,
7 and I got to pause and say this, you know, I was there
8 when he had the open meeting for minority businesses,
9 you know, to come and to hear about opportunities to be
10 a part of the work. I -- I -- I was there at that
11 meeting, I just went as -- you know, as just being
12 curious. It was very detailed, it was very thorough,
13 he even spoke of ways where they can break down jobs so
14 people could qualify in order to take advantage of
15 those business opportunities.

16 So I have been as -- as well as many
17 residents and stakeholders in our community, we have
18 been very pleased with what we've seen thus far. And
19 we have also been pleased with the response when we've
20 called or inquired or e-mailed, you know, the response
21 time has been very efficient, very quick.

22 Now, let's move on to the sewer issue, and
23 particularly Mill Street and this railroad track. You
24 know, we got -- we got a -- a -- a plus over here and
25 then we turn over here. So we've been dealing with

1 this issue for many moons, I know over a decade, with
2 Mill Street and the -- and the system crumbling
3 underneath the railroad.

4 Now, years ago, we were told that they could
5 not -- they had approached the railroad, the railroad
6 was not necessarily willing for the city to go
7 underneath. Recently, [REDACTED] informed us that they
8 were applying for the ARPA -- let me make sure I got
9 that right because I got the news article here where he
10 said, "Jackson to use ARPA funding to repair Mill."

11 So recently, when they -- when they were
12 applying, he came and he -- he spoke to us. He said,
13 we've got a workaround, we don't have to go under the
14 railroad to repair, we can go down, we can cut it here,
15 go down Mill, and tie in into the other part that's not
16 crumbling. We were very excited, everybody was
17 excited, businesses, artists, the residents, everybody
18 was excited because so many people are being impacted
19 by the sewages backing up into their businesses and
20 houses.

21 When the application was submitted and
22 approved, the one-to-one match and all that, we went to
23 him, we went to the One Percent Commission meeting. I
24 talked to him outside that meeting, I talked to him
25 outside of the City Council meeting, I talked to him

1 outside of a Citizen's Agenda meeting at the City Hall,
2 and we started to feel like we were getting back in the
3 stall system again.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ms. Butler, your time
5 is up.

6 MS. BUTLER: Okay.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But if you want to
8 stick around and come back, okay? Thank you. That's
9 the worst part of the job.

10 Someone else?

11 MR. HILTON: Hi, my -- my name is Andy
12 Hilton, I'm a lifelong Jackson resident. I'll try to
13 pick up where Monica left off because I'm -- I have a
14 business in the same neighborhood. Well, I'll back up.

15 As a child growing up in Jackson, a major
16 source of entertainment for me was playing in the Pearl
17 River, swimming, fishing, all that stuff. That's out
18 of the question now, it has been for three or four
19 years, probably longer than we were aware. You know,
20 children grow up in Jackson, can't touch the creeks,
21 they can't catch tadpoles or frogs, it's -- you know,
22 it's -- it's criminal.

23 Fast-forward to today, I have a business in
24 the [REDACTED] neighborhood. For the past two years there
25 has been a -- overflow doesn't do it justice, there's a

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1 gusher, a perennial flow, probably the equivalent of an
2 open fire hydrant of sewer that runs down the street
3 where people park in front of my business, my
4 neighbor's children are playing, riding their bikes.

5 As I understood it from the local news, Mr.
6 Henifin was briefly in charge of our sewer system,
7 thanks to Judge Wingate. I don't understand all the
8 details, but after years of complaining to the city,
9 DEQ, EPA and without response, I thought I'd take a
10 shot after hearing he was in charge, I sent him an e-
11 mail. I don't know how he did it, but I came out
12 there, the manhole was back on it, the sewer wasn't
13 flowing.

14 So to me, that is a -- a resounding
15 endorsement of what he and his team is capable of. I -
16 - I'm assuming they -- I've seen them running the
17 vacuum trucks around, you know, Jackson lost its vacuum
18 trucks because they weren't making the payments on it.
19 I see the management of a city like Jackson, it's kind
20 of like taking care of your house. You feel a little
21 sorry for, say your roof is leaking, that's very
22 expensive, if you're poor, you know, that's tough luck.
23 But if your roof is leaking because you didn't clean
24 your gutters, that's really on you.

25 And that's what I see happening in Jackson,

1 we're not even doing the basic level of maintenance to
2 keep the system working. So I am in total support of
3 Ted Henifin taking over the system.

4 Thank you.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. What's
6 the name of your business?

7 MR. HILTON: It's a studio rental business
8 on [REDACTED].

9 MR. CARSON: Hey, I'm Dorsey Carson. Can
10 you hear me? Is this --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

12 MR. CARSON: I -- I grew up here, I was born
13 in [REDACTED] here in Jackson, and have spent most of my life
14 here. I'm a construction lawyer and a government
15 procurement lawyer, and I get calls, not only from the
16 clients of mine that have done work for the City in the
17 past, but many of them won't do work for the City
18 anymore, because of poor contract administration and
19 things like that, and I have clients that won't bid. I
20 also get calls from people whose -- both businesses and
21 individuals whose -- who have sewer coming into their
22 businesses, regularly wanting me to sue the city.

23 And -- and so, first of all, kudos, they're
24 -- the, you know, for whatever reason, maybe the house
25 is burned down so bad that everybody's ready to rebuild

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1 it. So kudos for -- for showing the initiative and --
2 and driving to get this to -- to a point where maybe we
3 can see some action. I do -- and I -- I don't know,
4 you-all -- you-all might have said it before I got in
5 here, I'm not sure exactly who is footing the bill. I
6 -- I reviewed the consent decree enough to -- to see
7 that there's 125 million that looks to be through the
8 Corps of Engineers, but I'm not sure.

9 But I will say this, that I think it's very
10 important that we minimize emergency contracts, no bid
11 contracts, that we have fair, open competition for
12 these things. Because I think in the long run, we will
13 save money and get more out of what limited funds that
14 we have. And I've seen that way too long in Jackson,
15 that we spend money, no big contracts, emergency
16 repairs, and it costs us two or three times more than
17 it should.

18 So that's my public comment, I've got a lot
19 of other things that I think, but I'm going to leave
20 that to everybody else. Thank you-all.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

22 Next?

23 MS. JOHNSON: Hello, I'm Afranette
24 (phonetic) Johnson, and I'm a lifelong resident, my
25 children grew up in South Jackson, we grew up in South

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1 Jackson, we have no intentions of leaving South
2 Jackson. Now, we have not had lots of problems where I
3 live with sewer, but when I talk with some of my
4 friends and then some of the others, I mean, they're
5 just disgusted. So I -- first of all, let me say,
6 thank you-all for having a meeting and it doesn't
7 appear to be hostile. Now, maybe you-all did the
8 hostility stuff before I got here, but I don't know,
9 but -- but it does not -- it does not appear to be
10 hostile.

11 So we are here to have conversations about
12 how you-all can help us make our lives better, and then
13 how -- what we can do to help make our own lives
14 better. But if we have sewerage and no water and this
15 running in our houses and in our neighborhood, there's
16 nothing we can do but try to keep our children safe and
17 out of the way.

18 So I want to commend you-all. Now, I'm the
19 kind of person who will give you a chance and I'm going
20 to watch you, and just -- just to be honest. And then
21 if it does not happen -- now, one person on that podium
22 knows me real well, and if it does not happens, you
23 know, I come to you and say, this is what we expected,
24 this is what you led us to believe.

25 So all we are asking is, we know you can't

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1 do everything at once, but do what you can and do it
2 well and don't patch today and then you got to come
3 back in two weeks and patch again. Fix, so we can move
4 on with our lives and so you can move on with your
5 life.

6 So all we are saying is we -- we are
7 thankful that you are all here, we are thankful that
8 you-all are listening. And when you get through
9 listening and Judge Wingate -- Wingate makes his
10 decision, let's move forward and move Jackson forward,
11 and the best way to do that is get our water and our
12 infrastructure and stuff in order.

13 Thank you.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Good to
15 see you.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Good to see you.

17 MR. WADE: Hi, my name is John Wade. I
18 first want to thank you-all for being here, we really
19 do appreciate it. When I went out there to sign up,
20 I've had two or three people ask me what group I'm
21 with. I -- I'm with no group, I -- I was born in
22 Jackson, I've lived my entire life in Jackson with my
23 wife. My -- my children live in Jackson, my grandkids
24 live in Jackson, my father-in-law lives in Jackson, I
25 work in Jackson, I -- I'm committed to Jackson.

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1 Briefly as to the water, I mean, Ted Henifin
2 has done an outstanding job. As Judge Wingate said in
3 his order, he's clearly the man for the job. We used
4 to get boil water notices weekly, we haven't had one of
5 those in -- in months. And now we move on to the
6 sewer, and it's -- it's very unfortunate that -- that
7 our city has continued to violate the Clean Water Act
8 to the point where we have allowed 4.4 billion gallons
9 of untreated wastewater to pour into the Pearl River.

10 I had to read that two or three times. I --
11 I said, no, it has to be millions, billions. That --
12 anyway, that -- that's incredible. It's clear and --
13 and it hurts me to say this, but that -- that our city
14 is incapable presently of operating a sewer system.

15 Ted Henifin is -- is the man for the job, I
16 hope that he gets appointed, and that outside
17 influences, many who have a political agenda, aren't
18 allowed to interfere with -- with what he's capable of
19 doing. I know the long-term solution is further down
20 the road, but just in my view, based on what's been
21 going on the last 10 years, absent some significant
22 changes, I -- I don't see any way that -- that the
23 people of Jackson will feel comfortable turning over
24 the operation of our water and sewer system to the City
25 of -- of Jackson. I think Ted Henifin is the man, and

1 we appreciate all he's done, and we appreciate that --
2 y'all's time today.

3 Thank you.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

5 Next?

6 MR. CARTER: Hello, my name is Sandy Carter,
7 I've lived in Jackson for about ■ years. I have
8 unique experience of working on the water sewer bond
9 for about the last 20 years with Jackson. So I've
10 seen, over the last 20 years, I did -- really the last
11 10 years specifically, a real deterioration of what's
12 going on with our sewer system, the budgets, the things
13 along those lines, the collections that have been
14 coming in.

15 So I retired last year and, as my wife says,
16 I have way too much time on my hands, so I've gone to a
17 lot of these meetings. I've been -- this is my fifth
18 one. I've been to Judge Wingate's meetings, I've been
19 to as many meetings as I -- that I would know about and
20 go to, and I want to say that Ted Henifin has listened
21 patiently for hours about what's going on in Jackson
22 and how he can fix it. He's taken -- I've seen him
23 take bottles of water that people brought, take their
24 name, and said, I will have somebody at your house
25 tomorrow to fix it.

1 We had a major water break on Meadowbrook, I
2 live in [REDACTED], so we had a major water break in
3 [REDACTED] two weeks ago. Four hours he had it fixed,
4 that would have been four months, four days. I mean,
5 it would have been forever before he got it fixed, but
6 he got it fixed and our water is back on. No boil
7 water notice, we're -- we're up and running.

8 I live due west of an apartment complex.
9 For months and months of the last two years before --
10 starting in December, there -- I have two manholes in -
11 - in my backyard, those manholes were flowing raw sewer
12 for months. I would call the city, no response. No
13 response for months and months and months. I finally
14 called the DEQ, and DEQ, to their credit, came out,
15 looked at it with me and in months they got it fixed.
16 So that's not good because all that raw sewer was
17 flowing directly into Eubanks Creek, that creek flows
18 directly into the Pearl.

19 So that's what we're facing here in Jackson.
20 I'm an avid bike rider, I don't look like it, but
21 that's the exercise I get. Twice in the last two
22 years, I've been riding on public streets and been
23 splashed so badly with the raw sewer that I have to go
24 home, and I can't even go in my house, my wife has to
25 hose me off outside and throw my clothes away, it is

1 that bad.

2 So with what Ted has done for us with the
3 water system, I'm begging you to please let him take
4 over the sewer system and get us going back. It's been
5 a long road, and this is the first time I'll say that
6 I, in the last 10 years, have seen some hope that we
7 could maybe get the system and the city back running
8 again. And we are not going to have to boil our water,
9 and we're not going to have to worry about what we're
10 drinking.

11 And I want to say, thank you so much for
12 coming, thank you for the millions and millions of
13 dollars that the government sent us. This is a unique
14 opportunity, and we certainly don't want squander it.
15 Thank you very much.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

17 Yes, sir.

18 MR. SANDIFER: Good afternoon, everyone, my
19 name is Jimmie Sandifer. I'm a realtor. I'm a CPA.
20 I'm also a -- a local investor. My family and I have
21 several commercial buildings and businesses on [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED]

23 And I wished I had the luck that this
24 gentleman just had because I've had issues at home,
25 I've had issues at buildings I own, and I can't hardly

1 ever get someone to show up. When -- before this
2 Henderson (sic) guy came to town, I got a lot of lies,
3 when you called the city sewer department, well, the
4 truck's out. Then I have had sewage backing up at home
5 and at work, and you never could get anyone to really
6 show up and do anything.

7 So I just pray and hope that we can continue
8 to make some progress because interest rates have gone
9 up, most of the grocery stores have left town, and most
10 people don't have the assets to invest in this city, in
11 our community. But I do have, and my family does have,
12 and we've been trying to close one commercial building
13 since this time last year.

14 And we ended up closing a couple of them,
15 but we did it with cash, we couldn't get any further
16 because of the sewer problem. And they were saying
17 that it was an EPA problem and contaminated, even
18 though one of the buildings was -- all three of the
19 building had separate parcels of real estate, but we
20 still haven't got one of them closed yet.

21 And we just want to get through so that we
22 can go on about our lives. And if you-all can help us,
23 I certainly would appreciate it, because again, that --
24 this is a city that have a lot of potential.

25 I -- I'm a graduate of [REDACTED], I came

1 to Jackson in [REDACTED], I got a degree in accounting, and
2 an MBA, and I passed the CPA exam here, and I've been
3 in the real estate business for about [REDACTED] years. And I
4 know a lot of people that can afford that would love to
5 invest but, you know, it's killing our community.
6 School districts are going down, economic bases are
7 going down, and the people downtown don't seem to get
8 it.

9 And you can e-mail a person, you go down to
10 City Council, you see someone, you talk to them, then
11 you can't ever contact that person again because they
12 won't respond to your e-mail. You go down there; they
13 won't let you see them.

14 So you-all pray for us. Thank you.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

16 Scott?

17 MR. CRAWFORD: Thank you. Hi, Scott

18 Crawford, I live near [REDACTED], and
19 I've been back in Jackson since [REDACTED]. And I lived here
20 before and I'm going to stay, and like everyone else, I
21 care a lot about Jackson, and I want it to be the best
22 it can be.

23 I just wanted to add that I'm speaking on
24 behalf of my neighbors who experience flash flooding.
25 And, you know, whenever the sewers back up, it backs up

1 into their homes and they get sewage inside their
2 homes. And I -- I -- I -- you know, that's just an --
3 an environmental disaster. I've got mold under my
4 house and, you know, again, flash flooding.

5 And as a wheelchair user, I -- I need to
6 point out that, you know, wheelchairs are our legs, and
7 we don't -- we don't get to leave them outside. We
8 have to -- you know, we have to roll through everything
9 that's on our streets and it gets brought into our
10 houses inevitably every day.

11 And -- and I'm lucky. I've got a power
12 wheelchair. I have friends who are in manual
13 wheelchairs. I'm thinking about them, they have to
14 touch their wheels. Think about this, they're pushing
15 manual wheelchairs through filth, and they have to
16 carry it home. So I just wanted -- I -- I want
17 everyone to be considerate of that.

18 Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

20 Yes?

21 MR. JOHNSON: Good evening, my name is JC
22 Johnson, Jr. I am a lifelong resident of Jackson,
23 Mississippi, I also graduated from [REDACTED]. I love
24 Jackson. I defend Jackson.

25 What I'd like to say today is that during

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1 the water crisis in -- take transporting waters to the
2 communities and so forth, one incident that touched my
3 heart so deeply was I was riding through a neighborhood
4 and a young man, his -- they had just had a newborn
5 baby and I gave them a case of water and he so
6 pitifully said, may I have some more because we have a
7 newborn baby, for their to -- their baby needs, and so
8 forth.

9 We have problems, true enough, and I'm
10 thankful for this opportunity to be able to speak
11 today, and I would also note that -- to offer a
12 proposal. And one being that if we were to divide the
13 city of Jackson into quadrants and provide those vacuum
14 trucks for each quadrant, each sector of the quadrant,
15 and therefore you would have a vacuum truck available
16 to that area specifically that can help clean up the
17 sewer that's flowing on the streets, that's flowing
18 into people's yards. That they won't have to wait so
19 long to -- to -- for assistance. And it would also
20 diminish the time frame in getting stuff done and
21 helping the citizens to be -- to live in a healthy
22 state.

23 I have gone from one end of this country to
24 the other, there is no place in the United States of
25 America that I would rather live than Jackson,

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1 Mississippi. And I am of the persuasion and the belief
2 that Jackson is going to bounce back because the people
3 here love our city, we love where we live.

4 And the -- the -- the other thing is that
5 when it comes to the infrastructure, the water pipes
6 and sewer lines, that we provide that same measurement
7 of quadrants and get contractors for each quadrant,
8 they can be working simultaneously. Because no matter
9 where you start, if you start in one area and not the
10 other, somebody is going to be unhappy and they're
11 going to think that somebody is more prevalent than the
12 other. So if we were to have contractors working in
13 each sector at the same time, it would -- it would
14 minimize the time frame.

15 You know, the situation that we have today
16 didn't just start yesterday, it -- it goes all the way
17 back to 1821. I bet you can go and find some pipes
18 that they've laid then still in the ground that water's
19 flowing through. So we have an issue, true enough, and
20 I appreciate this opportunity to be able to express how
21 I feel, and offer some suggestions as to how we can
22 possibly make things happen.

23 Thank you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

25 MS. WEST: Good evening, my name is Jennifer

1 West.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hold on.

3 MS. WEST: Oh. My name is Jennifer West,
4 and I am from the [REDACTED] community as well. As a
5 citizen in that neighborhood -- or a person in that
6 neighborhood, we are really grateful for the
7 opportunity that the third party has come in with the
8 quality of service that they have given to our people.

9 It's a ripple effect for us, in that we are
10 in the center of a lot that goes on downtown. We have
11 economic development around us and as several of my
12 neighbors have already stated, they have businesses
13 there. There are more people that want to come to our
14 neighborhood and want to come to the city. But if the
15 infrastructure is not done correctly, they're not going
16 to come. And we're at a point where we see all of this
17 development happening and we want to be a part of it,
18 but we need help.

19 The fact that there is money involved helps
20 boost that improvement quicker. And at the end of the
21 day, everybody that lives in the neighborhood wants
22 safe drinking water, they want to be able to trust a
23 system again and be able to say, okay, I can invest
24 back in my neighborhood, because once you invest and
25 you buy property, that means you're on the tax roll,

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1 that means that money goes back into your communities.
2 And at the end of the day, the money that we get will
3 come back to the city of Jackson, so it's a circle of
4 that economy dollar staying in this area.

5 So we're thrilled at what you-all are doing,
6 we're excited to be a part of that process. And we
7 hope that all of these comments today are taken to
8 heart and that they are used in the best way we
9 possibly can.

10 Thank you.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

12 Anyone else?

13 MR. BAILEY: Good evening. Hey, my name is
14 Brent Bailey. I'm the Public Service Commissioner for
15 the Central District of Mississippi. I wanted to stand
16 back and allow the citizens and those who live in
17 Jackson to really speak up and talk about the
18 experiences they're having. I don't live in the city
19 of Jackson, but I do have a lot of friends and family
20 that do live here.

21 As a public service commissioner, the
22 question is also often asked of our office, why aren't
23 we engaged? Why aren't we doing something more
24 proactive to help resolve these water and sewer issues,
25 because we are the regulators of utilities in the

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1 state? Unfortunately by state law and multiple
2 passages -- passages in the authorizing statutes, Title
3 77 of State Law, the Public Service Commission is
4 prohibited from regulating the rates and service,
5 quality of service, of utilities services offered and
6 provided by municipalities. So it really ties our
7 hands into certain things that we can and cannot do.

8 However, we do, on a daily basis, receive
9 calls from customers throughout Jackson who are angry,
10 dissatisfied, and -- and really trying to cope with the
11 impacts of the -- of the failing water and sewer
12 system. And I've been out to homes, been out to these
13 areas, and seen for myself the impacts it's having on
14 the local community, homes, businesses and others.

15 We've had the opportunity to sit down and
16 have multiple conversations with Ted Henifin and -- and
17 I -- and his staff and contractors and others
18 throughout their adoption and acceptance of the -- the
19 water situation. And we certainly have confidence with
20 the right resources provided to him, he can do the same
21 thing in helping rebound and rebuild the sewer side.
22 So we certainly give an endorsement, I guess you could
23 say, to the work he's done to date on the water side.
24 Understanding he still has a long road ahead of him in
25 -- in reviving these issues, and turning the system

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1 around.

2 And we know there's equal, if not greater,
3 challenges ahead on the sewer side. So we hope with
4 open mind and certainly the resources necessary to
5 invest in these systems, that we can help rebuild the
6 communities and systems that the -- and the services
7 are provided to help not just rebound economically, but
8 a quality of life and a standard of living we all
9 accept, but also reverse the ecological challenges that
10 we see are happening around the city as well. So I
11 just want to thank you for the opportunity to speak
12 with you.

13 Thank you for hosting these forums, and it's
14 certainly important to hear from the citizens of the
15 city of Jackson and those who stepped up this evening
16 about their personal experiences, the impacts on their
17 business, and their communities.

18 Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

20 MR. CRAWFORD: Scott Crawford, just one more
21 comment or question. Would --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Scott, one second,
23 please. Thank you.

24 MR. CRAWFORD: I -- I forgot to mention that
25 I am wholly in support of Ted Henifin taking over, I --

1 I forgot to mention that.

2 But -- but -- but it seemed to me like a
3 good idea if -- if we all -- those of us who favor Ted
4 Henifin taking over the sewer system, temporarily,
5 would you please raise your hands? I'm in favor.
6 Okay. Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. MCBRIDE: Good evening. Good evening.
8 My name is Earnest McBride, I'm with the [REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED] here. And there's a question that's
10 been in my mind since the last hearing on the water
11 situation. And that was when the -- when the community
12 complaints came up, there seemed to have been two
13 choices. Take Ted Henifin and what -- and the
14 stipulated order, or EPA and all the other deals are
15 going to be swept off the table and everything is going
16 to be dropped back into the lap of Jackson taking care
17 of that \$600 million, \$800 million whatever it is, and
18 that EPA is going to walk away and then the -- the
19 consent decree from 2013 would be put back into play.

20 It's -- there seems to be some suggestion of
21 that in the stipulated order on the sewer also. I was
22 reading it in a hurry and it -- there seemed to have
23 been a -- a -- a -- a -- something to the effect that
24 this order will be in play, basically, unless the
25 courts decide that it is no longer acceptable or

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1 agreeable.

2 But I was just concerned about whether there
3 is -- its take it or Jackson has to be responsible --
4 Jackson and the people of Jackson are going to have to
5 be responsible for going back to the original consent
6 decree of 2013 and paying all the bills, you know, in
7 addition to all the other problems that we have here.

8 Thank you.

9 I wish we could get some answers.

10 MS. PERKINS: Hi, I am Deborah Perkins. I
11 serve with the John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation in
12 West Jackson. And blocks of -- the 1900 blocks of
13 Robinson Street and the 1900 blocks of Central Street,
14 between those two, there's a sewage drainage ditch.
15 And when those flash floods happen, the drainage ditch
16 overflows. The sewage department have said that the
17 drainage ditch clogs, so therefore the water cannot go
18 through.

19 When those drainage ditch overflows, two
20 houses on Central -- the 900 block -- 1900 block of
21 Central Street there, they flood, they receive drainage
22 inside their house underneath it, so therefore the
23 foundation and all that is happening. Plus it goes all
24 the way across the street, so anyone who has tried to
25 drive up and down Central -- the 1900 block of Central

1 Street, they have to go through this sewage issue. So
2 I'm just asking if something can be done at the 1900
3 block of Robertson Street and the 1900 block of Central
4 Street that -- with the drainage ditch that's flowing
5 in-between.

6 Thank you.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, ma'am.

8 Any other comments?

9 Ms. Butler, you coming back?

10 MS. BUTLER: Well, I think Mr. Crawford
11 opened the doorway, so I'm going to walk through it
12 with him.

13 The other thing I wanted to mention is, in
14 my daily work, I work with the most vulnerable
15 populations, our senior citizens and our youth. Many
16 of the families in our -- in [REDACTED] community, there's
17 three generations in a household. So back in 2007, our
18 community went through an intensive master planning
19 process. At that time, one of the main goals that we
20 put into that master planning document was we want to
21 diversify the housing stock in [REDACTED].

22 We did that a couple of years ago with a \$10
23 million affordable housing development. Most of the
24 people who entered those houses for the first time, or
25 those townhouses and homes, are still there. We're

1 going through the process now and actually getting
2 ready to break ground on another \$10 million housing
3 development. We're talking about 30-something homes,
4 affordable homes. And we've probably got calls four
5 times that number for people -- from people inside
6 Jackson and outside Jackson wanting to come.

7 The problem is, it's on Mill, Bell, Noel,
8 right there where the infrastructure is already
9 crumbling. We also have a loft development in the --
10 in the creative economy district, the artist district,
11 that's about to be finished. So I'm saying all this to
12 say -- but that's not -- that's not our development.

13 But I'm saying all this to say, we want
14 housing development, we want economic development, we
15 lost a business in [REDACTED] because the -- the -- the
16 young man invested his money, got a loan, purchased a
17 building and -- and sewage just flooded the building.
18 And he couldn't even make the notes because he couldn't
19 open a business, and so we lost that business.
20 Luckily, he went to [REDACTED], you know, luckily, he
21 stayed in the city, is what I'm saying, but we know
22 other businesses that left the city.

23 I'm saying all this to say, Mill Street is a
24 critical, critical thoroughfare for the city of
25 Jackson. We've got to -- we've been dealing with that

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1 particular issue way too long, we're talking about
2 decades. We've got to deal with that, otherwise,
3 eventually it's going to be a problem.

4 If it's crumbling under the railroad now,
5 eventually, it's going to impact the railroad. But
6 more importantly, it is causing so much sewage back up
7 into houses and businesses in that community. And we
8 are trying to add additional roofs in the neighborhood,
9 we -- we invested about \$200,000 in tearing down over
10 20 dilapidated properties. So we're trying to help
11 build up our community. But we -- if we add more roofs
12 already on a crumbling infrastructure, we're just going
13 to compound the problem.

14 So it is critical, you know, I remember as a
15 little girl sitting on Mill Street watching people
16 drive to the federal building to work, because it was
17 one of the -- one of the few places, you know, it is
18 not that many traffic lights, so you can get there
19 quickly downtown. And I remember the people waving at
20 us and they -- we were waving at them. But we've got
21 to bring that back, we've got to bring Mill Street
22 back, and we've got to bring back other parts of the
23 city where those thoroughfares are critical to
24 communities and families.

25 So thank you-all again. I'm in support of

1 Mr. Henifin and what he's done. And I just hope that
2 we add into the stipulated order, not only an initial
3 year or so, but the option to add additional time if
4 needed, because this is not going to be an easy fix.

5 Thank you.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

7 Any other comments?

8 MS. RICHARDSON: Good evening, my name is
9 Shirley Richardson, and I've been living in the city of
10 Jackson for over [REDACTED] years.

11 My main concern is that there was not a MOU,
12 a measurable outcome of understanding, given to the
13 residents of Jackson. Two days ago there was a study
14 done that Jackson is the fastest-decreasing city in the
15 United States of America. We lost 49,000 people, but
16 we have the largest hospitals, we have the largest
17 schools, we have a better community.

18 But no one said the measurable outcome of
19 what this water crisis has done to our homes, our
20 schools, and our neighborhood. We also did not get a
21 scope of service. We were told when we call in, report
22 all this, but no one shows you how to report it. So
23 you can put a Band-Aid on a surface wound but if you
24 don't teach a person how to do the surgery, you still
25 got the illness.

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1 So there was no information given in any
2 communities, how to report the sewage. There was
3 nothing given of feedback of how it's going to be cut
4 within the hours. And even on today, when I asked
5 where this meeting was, and I called down to the
6 office, they said, we don't know which room it's going
7 to be in. So the communication for these type of
8 meetings is going to have to be a little better because
9 the statistical data in the summer where we're looking
10 at is we're getting taxation without representation.

11 Our bills are going up three times with
12 sewers, just within the last two years. But a
13 percentage of the people that live in Jackson are
14 paying for it, but there's a greater percentage that
15 work in Jackson and in the surrounding areas and come
16 here but they take advantage of this water system, but
17 they don't live in Jackson. They don't live in Jackson
18 to do the plumbing system.

19 So my question is with the measurable
20 outcome, should there be a memorandum of understanding
21 to go into the community of how this situation should
22 work and how the community should be able to support
23 and report this information for justification of a
24 summary?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

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1 Are there any -- any other comments --
2 commenters?

3 MR. GOOD: Jeff Good again, and I was
4 pausing to make this second comment, but based on my
5 fellow Jackson resident that just spoke, she -- she
6 changed my narrative.

7 I was about to ask, first of all, thank you,
8 as everyone has said, thank you for taking the time and
9 the attention and what I felt was a really
10 extraordinary amount of communication, to let us know
11 where, when and how. I received four e-mails on this,
12 I -- I came to a previous event, and I'm on the e-mail
13 list, but I also saw it in the news, I saw it on social
14 media. I saw -- I've seen it in -- in a number of --
15 of places, how we're doing this. And I think that it
16 seems that you are going through extraordinary efforts
17 to get feedback.

18 I would also say it's very interesting that
19 almost unanimously our friend from the press here, and
20 perhaps the -- the former speaker, other than that
21 everyone who has spoken has been wildly in favor of the
22 transfer of the sewer system to the third-party
23 administrator. Not because of any animus, but because
24 we're all overwhelmed, tired, exhausted and we can't
25 take much more. That the city is as -- as many

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1 speakers spoke to, it's -- there's a lot of -- of just
2 real deterioration.

3 And this is an opportunity because we've
4 seen, in seven months, tremendous change. There's a
5 saying, you know, who are you going to believe, me or
6 your lying eyes?

7 The reality is that -- and I don't think Ted
8 Henifin is a -- is the second coming, but I think that
9 what process that this -- this administrator has put
10 together and the -- and the procedure is doing amazing
11 things in the city of Jackson, things we've never seen.
12 We've never seen someone saw cut or utility cut. When
13 a -- when one of -- one of these water mains break now,
14 the contractors bring out a saw and they make a
15 rectangle.

16 Why is that important? Because when you
17 just jump in with a backhoe and start ripping up
18 asphalt, it breaks all the asphalt all the way around
19 it. And so when it's filled, which previously we did
20 not fill potholes, we would leave rocks in them because
21 we were limited in our resources, water infiltrates
22 everywhere and the whole roadbed goes, and we have more
23 problems.

24 So what we're seeing is some services --
25 I've used the -- the -- the -- the seven-digit number,

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1 I've called in a service complaint. I had three water
2 outages at Broad Street, you-all know me about Broad
3 Street and running -- closing down. You-all haven't
4 heard a thing because, much like one of the former
5 speakers said, a water main break, a major one got
6 fixed in four hours, so we kept on going.

7 I would just -- just -- it really -- I think
8 that -- that it seems almost unanimous that our city is
9 ready for this. I know that there are many in our city
10 that have questions, and there are some that have --
11 there -- there's some movement to -- to derail this.
12 And I would just simply ask, what you've heard here and
13 what you're going to hear in the next couple of
14 sessions, and all the letters, it seems to me that
15 there's -- that we are ready for fundamental change in
16 our city. And that perhaps this is the opportunity for
17 doing so.

18 Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Anyone else? Going
20 once, going twice? Okay.

21 All right. So I think we've now come to the
22 end of our public comment period, and I want to thank
23 you-all so much for your heartfelt comments. It is
24 heartwarming as a resident of the city of Jackson to
25 hear and see other people who live in Jackson, who want

1 to see Jackson thrive. And this is our city, this is
2 an opportunity, and we thank you-all for taking the
3 time to come out tonight and give us your input.

4 We want to also thank our federal and our
5 state speakers for participating, and for sharing the
6 agent -- their agency's perspectives. And if you
7 should think of something you wish that you'd said
8 tonight and you didn't, you still have the opportunity
9 to go on the website and submit your public comment,
10 either by mail or by e-mail.

11 Scattered around the room, you'll see some
12 QR codes, and on the tables. There are -- they're
13 there -- and those QR codes will direct you to the
14 federal register that's going to tell you again how to
15 submit your comments. You can also find a copy -- a
16 complete copy of the stipulated order there. So if you
17 would, take a -- a picture of the QR code to share that
18 with others.

19 We're going to send you a thank you e-mail
20 to thank you for your attendance, and we'll include
21 that QR code in that e-mail as well. And you-all
22 should have the fact sheet that was available, and
23 appendices that were available, to share for each of
24 you.

25 We are thankful for our [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED]. Thank you so
3 much for being here with us and for rendering your
4 services.

5 Now, we're going to ask you-all to do us a
6 favor, and that is that you came tonight. There's
7 still two other opportunities for people to come
8 tomorrow to give their comments. We will be at
9 Tougaloo College from 10:00 to 12:00 and from 6:00 to
10 8:00 tomorrow in the Bennie G. Thompson Auditorium.
11 So call somebody that you know has been impacted, and
12 ask them to please come and give us their comments.

13 Please know that DOJ, EPA, and MDEQ will
14 continue to provide updates when there is further
15 information about enforcement progress that we're able
16 to share publicly. We look forward to having future
17 conversations with you and other community leaders and
18 members as we continue to work together for what has
19 been a theme tonight, the good of the city of Jackson.
20 Thank you for all you-all have done individually.
21 Thank you for what you continue to do for our Jackson
22 community.

23 And we wish you-all safe travels and have a
24 great evening. Thank you.

25 (MEETING CONCLUDED)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

2

3 I, Doug Yarborough, a transcriptionist
4 located in Charlotte, North Carolina, hereby certify:

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6 That the foregoing is a complete and accurate
7 transcript of the digital audio recording of the
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9 best of my skills and ability.

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11 I further certify that I am not related to any
12 of the parties to this action by blood or marriage and
13 that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this
14 matter.

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16 IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
17 this 24th day of August, 2023.

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